

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 125903
ORIGIN NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-06 CA-01 L-03 H-01 HA-05
CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02
PPT-01 /053 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/ARP:FGERLACH
APPROVED BY NEA/ARP:JWTWINAM
NEA/P - INFO
SCS/SCA - INFO

-----006938 180314Z /62

P 172254Z MAY 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMCONSUL DHAHRAN PRIORITY
INFO USLO RIYADH PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, SA

SUBJECT: ESCAPE OF JOHN L. MCDONALD

REF: JIDDA 3693

1. FOLLOWING ARTICLE APPEARED IN MAY 17 WASHINGTON POST
(PG. A-16). BEGIN QTE: "ESCAPE IN A PACKING BOX. HOUSTON--
A TEXAS BUSINESSMAN BARRED FROM LEAVING SAUDI ARABIA BE-
CAUSE OF A CONTRACT DISPUTE WITH SAUDI OFFICIALS SAYS HE
ESCAPED BY AIRFREIGHTING HIMSELF IN A WOODEN PACKING BOX.

"JOHN L. MCDONALD, 47, PRESIDENT OF HERITAGE BUILDING
SYSTEMS INTERNATIONAL, SAID HE CONTRACTED WITH THE SAUDIS
TO SUPPLY CONCRETE HOUSING FORMS, BUT HE SAID THE SAUDIS
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CLAIMED AFTER HE ARRIVED THAT THE DOLS 400,000 DEAL
INCLUDED INSTALLING THE FORMS AND ERECTING THE HOUSING.

"ON NOV 19 THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT SEIZED HIS PASSPORT, HE
SAID, AND HE BECAME CONVINCED (HE) WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED
TO LEAVE FOR YEARS, IF EVER.

"HE CHARGED THAT THE SAUDIS TRIED TO TRICK HIM INTO SIGNING
A STATEMENT THAT HE HAD BEEN TREATED FAIRLY, AND THAT WHEN
HE "TOLD THEM I WOULD DIE BEFORE I WOULD SIGN THEIR DOCU-

MENTS, THEY TOLD ME THAT COULD BE ARRANGED."

"MCDONALD BUILT A BOX 4-FEET HIGH, 2 1/2-FEET WIDE AND
2 1/2-FEET DEEP, WITH SMALL AIR HOLES. ON MAY 7 HE PLACED
A BAG OF CEMENT APPROXIMATELY HIS WEIGHT INSIDE THE BOX
AND HAD IT DELIVERED TO THE AIRPORT. AFTER CUSTOMS
CLEARANCE, HE WENT TO THE AIRPORT AND GOT IN THE BOX WHILE
GUARDS WEREN'T LOOKING. WHEN THE BOX WAS UNLOADED AT A
EUROPEAN AIRPORT, MCDONALD CLIMBED OUT AND DECLARED HIMSELF.
HE ARRIVED IN HOUSTON MAY 8."END QTE. VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, REFUGEES, PASSPORT RESTRICTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE125903
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: FGERLACH
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780208-0943
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780548/aaaaboft.tel
Line Count: 76
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 80deb39b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 JIDDA 3693
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2659259
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ESCAPE OF JOHN L. MCDONALD
TAGS: CASC, SOPN, SA, (MCDONALD, JOHN L)
To: DHAHRAN
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/80deb39b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014